

Terminal Veteran Honored with Apiary

Major Byron “Mark” Cato served nearly 20 years as an Air Force pilot flying combat missions. Now he’s facing his biggest battle. Doctors give him only days to live. Cancer is claiming his life but not his legacy.

Saturday, August 29, 2015, the West Virginia Veterans and Warriors to Agriculture program dedicated a special apiary in his honor. It’s called the Major Byron “Mark” Cato (Ret.) Memorial Veterans Beekeeper Training Facility.

West Virginia Agriculture Commissioner Walt Helmick was on hand at Geezer Ridge Farm in Hedgesville for the dedication, saying of Cato, “Here’s an example of a program that’s helped a West Virginia Warrior begin to heal. This center, in his name, will go on to assist many more veterans dealing with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and other emotional and physical wounds sustained on the battle field.”

Cato and his wife Teri graduated from the apiary program earlier this year and have spent a lot of time at Geezer Ridge. He says just being around bees brings him a sense of peace. He is honored the apiary will bear his name.

“It’s taking people’s lives and changing them to help others. That’s what I’m proud of,” explains Cato. His only regret? He won’t live long enough to see the impact of the program on others.

Veterans and Warriors to Agriculture have two new beekeeping training sessions set for September. The goal is to have as many as 200 veterans join the two-year program in 2016.

If you know a veteran who might benefit from the program, contact James McCormick at jmccormick@wvda.us or call 304-206-6065 for more information.